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ABSTRACT

In this paper on the school textbook system in Japan, information is provided on the school textbook system during the post-war period. Topics discussed in this area include: (1) the establishment of the school textbook authorization system; (2) improvements to the school textbook system; (3) putting the free school (public school) textbook system into practice; and (4) reorganization of the school textbook adoption system. A section about the mechanism of the present school textbook system includes discussions on: (1) production and distribution of school textbooks; (2) number of types and copies needed of school textbooks; (3) the mechanism of the authorization system and of school textbook adoption; and (4) school textbook publishers. The school textbook system of the future is discussed with suggestions for improvement in such areas as textbook research and the writing, compilation, authorization, adoption, evaluation, and distribution of textbooks. (JD)

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THE SCHOOL TEXTBOOK SYSTEM IN JAPAN

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N O T E

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I. THE SCHOOL TEXTBOOK SYSTEM IN JAPAN

1. The School Textbook System during the Postwar Period

(1) The Establishment of the School Textbook Authorization System

In Japan, textbooks are defined as "books for pupils and students designed to be used by teachers as the main teaching materials for the subjects prescribed in the Course of Study, at elementary, lower and upper secondary schools or their equivalents" ("Law Governing Provisional Measures on the Publication of Textbooks" enacted in 1948). Textbooks play an important role in the school education of Japan, ensuring that pupils and students acquire the basic and fundamental knowledge which is indispensable for their development as citizens.

Looking back at the history of the textbook system, the important role played by textbooks has consistently been taken into consideration in the many improvements that have been made since the establishment of the modern textbook system. With regard to elementary school textbooks during the prewar period, although there were times when a notification system and authorization system were in use, the State compilation system was adopted from 1904. On the other hand, with regard to secondary school textbooks, the authorization system was in general adopted. After the war, a radical reform of the education system was carried out on the basis of deliberations on the prewar education system. With regard to textbooks, the School Education Law enacted in 1947 specified the authorization system for elementary, lower and upper secondary school textbooks. This system aims to ensure a supply of appropriate textbooks and at the same time to make the fullest use of originality on the part of textbook authors. The system also plays an important role in the maintenance of appropriate educational standards and the guarantee of educational neutrality, a position consonant with the state of affairs in Japan as a nation.

On the basis of this authorization system, the textbook system in Japan has undergone a continuous process of improvement during the postwar period.

(2) Improvements to the School Textbook System

The new textbook system gradually took root over a period of years, but various problems began to be pointed out as the authorization system was put into practice.

For example, an increase in the number of textbook publishers triggered stiff sales competition, and problems such as unfair competition with regard to the selection of textbooks came to the surface. For this reason, a warning of suspected violation of the Antimonopoly Act was issued by the Fair Trade Committee in 1952, and in 1956, on the basis of the Antimonopoly Act, it was specifically prohibited to carry on "textbook business by unfair means", including such

actions as canvassing for the adoption of a company's textbook by enabling those adopting it or salesmen to profit financially, slandering other companies' textbook and thereby interfering in the adoption process, etc. In dealing with situations of this kind, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture made notifications and undertook to issue guidance regulating advertizing behaviour by resident representatives of publishers and lectures sponsored by publishers.

Moreover, the authorizing procedures were not able to keep pace with an increase in the number of textbooks of every kind: the clerical task involved in the authorization process were not always carried out with sufficient thoroughness, resulting in a number of errors, and criticisms of textbooks intensified. Then in 1955, these problems were discussed on a large scale by the Special Committee for Administrative Inspection of the House of Representatives. This Committee's investigations covered a wide range of topics related to textbooks including authorization, publication, distribution, adoption and price. The results of this investigation were brought together in a report, which pointed out that the clerical procedures which formed part of the authorization process were carried out in a very careless manner, and concluded that the government should consider promoting a proper authorization process by re-examining its clerical procedures.

Given this situation, in 1955 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture asked the Central Council for Education to inquire into "Measures for the Improvement of the Textbook System." The reason given for the inquiry was that, looking at the achievements to date of the postwar textbook system, which constituted one example of the educational reform and fulfilled an important function in elementary and secondary school growth, it was recognized that re-examination of the system was required and that there was a need to have a wide-ranging discussion of the whole textbook system and to take measures for improvement in view of the criticisms from various sources.

In the same year, the Central Council for Education submitted to the Minister for Education, Science and Culture a report containing the following statements:

> "Since this country's present textbook system represents one feature of the postwar educational reform, the fundamental characteristics of the present system should be maintained. However, many of the current laws and regulations related to textbooks are on provisional measures which were laid down hastily in the special circumstances of the postwar period, and there are a number of legal defects in their contents. Moreover, there is a need to ensure appropriate measures with regard to the contents, price and adoption of the textbooks, and to improve the smoothness and fairness of the publication supply."

In the following year, 1956, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture drew up a "Textbook Bill" on the basis of the report from

the Central Council and submitted it to the National Diet for discussion. The bill included all the measures concerning publication and authorization which had hitherto been stipulated by the "Law Governing Provisional Measures on the Publication of Textbooks" and by the "Regulations for Textbook Authorization" and, with the required improvements, was intended to be a comprehensive law concerning textbook administration. However, although the bill passed through the House of Representatives, deliberations in the House of Councillors did not finish before the end of the session, and ultimately the bill failed to become law.

As a result of this failure, the administration of the textbook system as a whole became difficult; however, in order that various arrangements could be carried out, administrative measures regarding improvements began to be implemented from 1956.

To begin with, the number of members of the sub-committee of the Textbook Authorization and Research Council was substantially increased from 16 to 80, in addition to the 40 full-time textbook examination officers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

With only 16 numbers on the Council it had been impossible to secure specialists in every subject and to carry out detailed investigations and discussions over the whole range of subjects covered. The examination of textbooks used to be carried out on a part-time basis by practising teachers. In such cases, however, a thorough investigation was not always carried out, and it was decided to entrust textbook examinations to full-time textbook examination officers.

Furthermore, a total of 600 textbook centres was established in prefectures and designated cities, so that teachers were enabled to carry out research on textbooks at all times.

(3) Putting the Free School Textbook System into Practice

Within the framework of the provision of free compulsory education, a start was made in 1951 on measures providing for the introduction of free textbooks. Specifically, the "Law concerning the Provision of Textbooks for Pupils Entering School in 1951" was enacted, and it was stipulated that when the local public authority provides Japanese and mathematics textbooks free of charge to pupils entering public elementary schools the State shall supply them with subsidies. In 1952, the "Law concerning the Provision of Textbooks for Pupils Entering School" was enacted, and it was decided that the State should provide Japanese and mathematics textbooks free of charge. This provision was suspended from 1954, and in 1956, within the framework of the implementation of social security policies, the "Law concerning State Assistance with Regard to the Provision of Textbooks for Pupils Having Difficulties in Entering School" was enacted, according to which it was decided that

textbooks should be distributed free of charge to pupils having financial difficulties.

Subsequently, voices could be heard proposing that a free textbook system should be introduced within the framework of the implementation of free compulsory education, and a policy of providing free textbooks during the period of compulsory education was embodied in the "Law concerning Free Textbooks in Compulsory Education Schools", enacted in 1962. At the same time, a "Provisional Committee for the Investigation of the Free Textbook System during the Period of Compulsory Education" was formed with the aim of discussing definite plans for the implementation of this provision. In the following year, 1963, the "Law concerning the Free Provision of Textbooks in Compulsory Education Schools" was enacted on the basis of the report of the investigatory committee, and a complete free textbook distribution system was established. This free distribution, in conjunction with national financial measures, was gradually introduced on a yearly basis from 1963, and the free distribution of textbooks to all grades in compulsory education was completed in 1969.

In 1983, the cost of free distribution of textbooks to 17.52 million pupils and students in elementary and lower secondary schools amounted to 45.3 billion yen.

(4) Reorganization of the School Textbook Adoption System

The problem of adoption, i.e. the selection of a particular textbook for school use from among the numerous authorized textbooks, emerged as a new problem in the new authorization system. The "Law Governing Provisional Measures for the Publication of Textbooks", enacted in July 1948, regulated publishing methods and the exhibition of textbooks without referring to adoption; however, the "Board of Education Law", which was enacted almost simultaneously, redefined adoption in terms of an important task to be undertaken by boards of education. The Board of Education Law was revised in 1956 as the "Law concerning the Organization and Functions of Local Education Administration", and under this law matters concerned with the adoption of textbooks were defined as being within the scope of the duties of the board of education as follows: one of duties of the boards of education is to deal with measures on textbooks and other teaching materials.

If one looks at the situation with regard to textbook adoption at this time, one finds that in the case of cities an entire city was regarded as one adoption area, or in the case of towns and villages an entire district. Alternatively, several cities and districts might combine to form one area, and a popular method was for the boards of education of the constituent cities/districts (towns and villages) to co-operate in creating a common adoption area with the aim of unifying as far as possible the categories of textbooks used in that area. This method satisfies various needs, such as allowing for pupils and student moving to other schools or facilitating co-operative study by teachers.

In 1955, this method was in use in 26 out of 47 prefectures. In 1962, the common adoption area system was put into practice in every prefecture apart from Tokyo, with the participation of 83 percent of all districts and cities and 75 percent of all elementary and lower secondary schools. Given this background, the already popular method of textbook adoption over a wide common area was systematized and incorporated into the 1963 "Law concerning the Free Provision of Textbooks in Compulsory Education Schools."

The system can be described in the following way: The prefectural boards of education set up textbook adoption areas within the prefecture, composed of districts or cities, or of combined adoption areas. The prefectural boards of education offer guidance, advice or assistance concerning textbook adoption to the municiapl boards of education on the basis of the opinions of the Prefectural Council for Textbook Selection. Textbook selectors, i.e. the municipal boards of education, with the help of this advice, then choose one textbook for each subject. In cases where two or more cities, towns or villages comprise an adoption area and when dealing with textbooks for municipal elementary and lower secondary schools, the municipal boards of education within the adoption area arrange the formation of an Adoption Area Council and, after due discussion, select one textbook for each subject.

This adoption system is not different from the system that existed before its systematization in law, and it is implemented in such a way that the opinions of the teachers carrying the actual teaching loads are given every possible consideration.

With regard to the adoption of textbooks for upper secondary schools, in prefectural schools, for example, the body responsible for establishing the school, i.e. the prefectural board of education, has a duty to select textbooks. However, what actually happens is that each school carries out its own investigations and selection, and reports in confidence to the prefectural board of education, where its report is normally accepted without change.

2. The Mechanism of the Present School Textbook System

The historical background to the textbook system currently being operated in Japan has been outlined above; the mechanism can be described in the following terms:

(1) The Production and Distribution of School Textbooks from Writing and Compilation to Use in Schools

The basis of the textbook system in Japan consists in the writing and compilation of textbooks by private publishers. Each publisher prepares textbooks on the basis of the prescribed Course of Study and in accordance with the standards for textbook authorization, with the addition of original ideas, and applies for authorization.

The textbooks are permitted to be used in school as textbooks only after they have been authorized by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. When an application for authorization in repsect of certain textbooks is made by a publisher, the textbooks are submitted to the textbook examination officers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and at the same time to the Textbook Authorization and Research Council, an advisory organ to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. The Minister authorizes textbooks on the basis of the Council's reports, and judgements on the suitability of textbooks are made on the basis of the standards for textbook authorization.

There are usually several authorized textbooks in any one subject and, therefore, only one type of textbook must be chosen from authorized ones for school use. In the case of public schools, the board of education having jurisdiction over the school has the power to make the selection, as does the principal in national and private schools. The number of copies needed of the adopted textbooks is reported to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. On the basis of these reports the Minister issues instructions to each publisher regarding the number of copies of textbooks to be published. The publisher prints textbooks in accordance with the instructions and distributes them to each school through distributors. The distributed textbooks are handed out to the pupils and students and used.

Textbooks used in national, public and private schools covering the compulsory education (elementary and lower secondary schools of all kinds including those for the blind, deaf and otherwise handicapped) are, as mentioned above, provided free of charge to every pupil and student, and the cost is borne by the State. The total number of textbooks needed every year in elementary and secondary schools is around 200 million copies.

Number of Types and Copies Needed of School Textbooks (1983)

Classification	Types	Itemized Types	Copies Needed
Elementary School Textbook (Textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education)	43	336	126,928,346
Lower Secondary School Textbook (Authorized by the Ministry of Education)	75	143	56,137,607
Upper Secondary School Textbook (Produced in accordance with the new Course of Study)			
(Authorized by the Ministry of Education)	597	635	28,526,362
(Copyrighted by the Ministry of Education)	54	64	160,719
(Produced in accordance with the old Course of Study)			
(Authorized by the Ministry of Education)	653	695	12,289,448
(Copyrighted by the Ministry of Education)	23	28	39,617
Subtotal	1,327	1,422	41,016,146
Special Education School Textbook (Copyrighted by the Ministry of Education)	21	143	86,858
Total	1,466	2,044	224,168,957

Notes: (1) "Type" refers to the classification of textbooks into subjects and areas; for example, a series of Japanese language textbooks for first to sixth grade pupils in elementary schools is counted as one type.

(2) "Itemized type" refers to the separate volumes of textbooks classified by grade and area; for example, Volume I and Volume II are counted as two itemized types.

(3) "Copies Needed" refers to the number of copies reported by the prefectural boards of education to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in order that the total number of copies of each authorized textbook can be calculated.

(2) The Mechanism of the Authorization System

As stated above, the textbook authorization system in Japan is applied to textbooks for elementary and secondary schools in accordance with the School Education Law. The authorization of textbooks refers to the process whereby the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture judges textbooks written and compiled by private publishers with a view to deciding whether they are suitable for use as textbooks or not, and authorizing those which reach the standard required.

When considering school education in elementary and secondary schools, it is necessary to pay attention to the maintenance and enhancement of educational standards on a national level, to the provision of equal educational opportunity, to monitoring the contents of what is being taught and maintaining a position of educational neutrality. In order to ensure that these criteria are met the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture establishes the Course of Study at elementary and secondary school levels as the standard of the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools and takes decisions regarding the authorization of textbooks, which play an important role as the primary teaching resource.

Textbook authorization is carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in accordance with the recommendations of the Textbook Authorization and Research Council on the basis of the standards for textbook authorization; in this way textbook authorization is carried out in an objective and impartial manner.

The standards for textbook authorization consist of basic conditions, which are applied equally to all subjects, and indispensable conditions, which are applied to individual subjects, and detailed regulations explain and interpret the conditions. These are announced in advance by the Ministry as the standards which will be applied during the authorization process.

The Textbook Authorization and Research Council is located within the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and its members are selected from the ranks of university professors and elementary and secondary school teachers. Textbooks submitted for authorization are examined by the textbook examiners and by the textbook examination officers. Textbook examiners number several hundred and are chosen every year from among teachers in universities, elementary and secondary schools all over the country in accordance with school levels and subjects. The textbook examination officers are full-time members of staff of the Ministry, and the persons employed as such invariably have substantial teaching experience at schools and universities. There were 49 of them in 1983.

The Council synthesizes the results of reports by the textbook examiners and the textbook examination officers together with the results of independent investigations by Council members. The Council's sub-committee is composed of

85 members as of January 1984. Authorization is implemented in cycles of about 3 years for each textbook.

(3) The Mechanism of School Textbook Adoption

Textbook adoption refers to the decision as to which textbooks are to be used in school. The process of authorization is described in section 2-(2) above.

Textbook publishers submit a list of authorized textbooks to be published in the following academic year to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. The Minister compiles a catalogue of the reported textbooks and forwards this to schools and municipal boards of education through the prefectural boards of education. The publishers also send samples of textbooks to be published during the coming academic year to prefectural boards of education and adoption authorities (municipal boards of education and principals of national and private schools) with a view to possible adoption.

The prefectural boards of education study the submitted textbooks and give guidance, advice and assistance to enable those responsible for adoption decisions to make an appropriate selection. To carry out their study and investigations, the prefectural boards of education establish Councils for Textbook Selection, consisting of informed principals and teachers, representatives of the boards of education and other persons with relevant qualifications and experience. Data compiled as a result of the process of study and investigation is forwarded to the adoption authorities.

The prefectural boards of education hold textbook exhibitions every year in July for a certain length of time, so as to provide an opportunity for school teachers, principals and others concerned with adoption to view and study the textbooks for themselves. The exhibitions are held in exhibition halls (Textbook Centres) in each prefecture.

In addition to studying the data provided by the prefectural boards, adoption authorities carry out their own investigations and select one type of textbook for one subject; it is at this stage that co-operative adoption takes place, i.e. several adoption authorities jointly adopt the same textbooks. (Refer to I-1-(4)) At present, there are 497 adoption areas throughout the country where co-operative adoption takes place.

(4) School Textbook Publishers

Publishers of textbooks for 1983 number 67, of which 25 publish textbooks for compulsory education schools. In order to ensure that the publication of textbooks for compulsory education schools is carried out with due regard for continuity and stability, a designation system has been adopted, whereby publishers to whom disqualifying causes (e.g. bankruptcy or a recent prison sentence) do not

apply are allowed to apply for permission to publish authorized textbooks only when the following criteria are applicable:

1) The total capital investment of the publisher must be valued at over 10 million yen.

2) There must be five or more persons who are primarily in charge of textbook editing and who are recognized as being well-suited to carry out this task.

3) There are persons on the staff with significant experience in book publishing.

4) The publisher has no past record of gravely unjust acts related to book publishing.

II. THE SCHOOL TEXTBOOK SYSTEM IN THE FUTURE

In November 1981, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture asked the Central Council for Education to "carry out an inquiry into the fundamental content of elementary and secondary school education in relation to the changing pattern of the times." The reason for the inquiry was the need to discuss, from a long term point of view, the content and methods of elementary and secondary education, which constitutes the basis of Japan's education system as it tries to ensure, as it moves toward the 21st century, that the coming generation are sound in mind and body and are equipped to cope with rapidly changing social developments, including industrial structures in the future, the growth of an information-oriented society, the increase in the number of aged persons, the tendency to develop closer international links, etc.

The Central Council for Education duly discussed the educational content of elementary and secondary school education and the closely related question of textbooks; the results of the latter discussion formed the contents of a report "WHAT A TEXTBOOK SHOULD BE", made to the Minister in June 1983.

In this report, the important role to be played by textbooks in school education in the future is made clear, and at the same time various suggestions are made regarding measures for improvement in such areas as textbook research and the writing, compilation, authorization, adoption, evaluation and distribution of textbooks. Accepting the main points of the report, the Ministry set about taking measures which would lead to the implementation of its recommendations; it could be said that the report has shown the way for future improvements of textbooks used in elementary and secondary education in Japan.

The main outline of the report is as follows:

1. The Writing and Compilation of School Textbooks

The writing and compilation of good textbooks is considered to be dependent on the results of a variety of studies on the content of each subject and on a profound understanding of the various stages of development of pupils; with this in mind, the following points are offered for consideration:

"1) In view of the fact that textbook publication has a public aspect in the contribution it makes to school education, textbook publishers should be aware of their social mission and exert themselves to provide textbooks of high quality. With this aim in mind, textbook publishers should make every effort to secure good textbook authors in order to create distinctive textbooks with original ideas as well as consolidating the editorial section by further upgrading the personnel now in charge of editing. Also, in view of the public aspect of textbook publication, consideration should be given to the introduction of a system of designating textbook publishers for upper secondary school textbooks.

2) Regarding the writing and compilation of textbooks, publishers should make every effort to pay due consideration to the development stages of the learner in providing basic and fundamental information and making the contents understandable.

3) People who are in charge of the writing and compilation of textbooks should be fully aware of the extent of their responsibilities and should aim to create textbooks which match the understanding and critical abilities of their pupils, writing from an impartial, objective and unbiased standpoint. Where reference is made, for example, to the authors or editors of textbooks, such references should be fully in line with the actual responsibilities for writing and editing of the persons so referred to."

Regarding 1), the present position is that the system whereby only publishers designated by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture are permitted to publish textbooks for school use is applied only to textbooks for compulsory education schools (elementary and lower secondary schools) (See I-2-(4) above), but there is a move to apply the same system to upper secondary school textbooks.

Regarding 3), this can be seen as a suggestion aimed at securing textbooks of higher quality by drawing the attention of authors and editors to a further awareness of their involvement and by calling for further clarification by publishers, since it has been pointed out that the denotation of authors and editors in textbooks does not necessarily agree with the actual responsibilities of writing and editing.

2. The Authorization of School Textbooks

Improvements are needed with regard to the following points in order that the aims of the textbook authorization system can be effectively carried out.

"1) Further discussion is needed as to how the examination of textbooks with a view to authorization should be carried out in order to ensure that the functions of the Textbook Authorization and Research Council can be fully and effectively put into practice.

2) The criteria for textbook authorization are to be decided in accordance with the Fundamental Law of Education, the School Education Law and the Courses of Study for Elementary, Lower and Upper Secondary Schools. These criteria constitute not only a measure determining whether or not authorization is to be permitted, but also practical guidelines for the writing and compilation of textbooks; in the light of this function, the following measures should be undertaken in order to make the criteria into more effective and clearer guidelines:

   a. The standpoints underlying the criteria should be made clearer in order that children can be helped to acquire the fundamental knowledge necessary for their development as citizens and an awareness of their responsibility as Japanese for the future destiny of Japan.

   b. More detailed and clearer statements of the criteria should be made so as to facilitate the realization in textbooks of the Objectives and Contents of the Courses of Study.

3) The duration of the cycle of textbook authorization should be prolonged so as to allow sufficient time for research results, especially on teaching materials and teaching methods, to be fully incorporated into the process of writing and compilation, and so that the authorization procedures can be implemented in a more careful and detailed manner.

4) With regard to textbook examination officers in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, well-qualified specialists should be recruited and arrangements should be made to facilitate a more comprehensive examination.

5) Textbooks are authorized on the basis of the results of the examination carried out by the Textbook Authorization and Research Council; as part of the examination process, authors and publishers are provided with full explanations and are allowed to carry on discussions with and appeal to the examining panel. Since the textbook authorization process is carried out within the framework of such stringent procedures,

it is regarded as being inappropriate to open the details of the authorization process to the public. From the point of view, however, of gaining the understanding of the public with regard to the textbook authorization system, consideration should be given to the question of allowing public access to main points of the results of the authorization examination."

3. The Adoption of School Textbooks

The following measures should be taken with regard to the adoption of textbooks in compulsory education schools.

"1) The adoption of textbooks is the responsibility of municipal boards of education, which receive guidance, advice and assistance from the prefectural boards of education; adoption is, therefore, carried on within the framework of collaboration between the prefectural and municipal boards. However, under the present local educational administration system issues such as the maintenance and enhancement of educational standards within the prefecture are the responsiblity of the prefectural boards of education. When one reflects, therefore, on the fact that prefectural boards of education play a leading part in the guidance, administration and in-service training of teachers, and on the rule which states that prefectural boards of education are to set standards for content of curriculum, it seems desirable for the following measures to be taken in order to strengthen the collaboration between prefectural and municipal boards of education with regard to the adoption of textbooks.

a. Having due regard to the above issues and to the ability of the prefectural boards of education to examine textbooks, the jurisdiction and responsibility of each of the two agencies should be further defined. One possibility might be, for example, for the prefectural board of education to make a selection of textbooks and for the municipal board of education to adopt textbooks from among those so selected.

b. The optimum size of the adoption area should be examined, bearing in mind the need for further promotion of smooth collaboration between prefectural and municipal boards of education, and the homogeneity of cultural and social conditions in the various districts within the prefectures. On this point, the most suitable proposal is considered to be that of regarding as an adoption area the area within the jurisdiction of the local education office in the prefectural board of education or a combination of such areas.

2) Regarding the adoption of textbooks, there is a need to improve and refine the research functions of the Council for Textbook Selection at prefectural level and the Textbook Adoption Area

Conference at municipal level.

3) The duration of the textbook adoption cycle should be prolonged in accordance with that of the textbook authorization cycle."

The education office referred to in 1) above is an organization of offices located in prefectural boards of education with the responsibility of carrying out the office procedures of the prefectural boards of education; several of these offices are present in almost every prefecture (as of May 1983 there are 283 education offices in 47 prefectures).

4. The Free Distribution of School Textbooks to School Pupils in Compulsory Education

As previously mentioned in I-1-(3), the free distribution of textbooks, like free tuition, is implemented on the basis of the principle of free compulsory education. In recent years, however, voices have been heard questioning the continuance of the existing system, and a report was made to the National Administrative Reform Council held in March 1983 suggesting that consideration be given to discontinuing the existing system in view of the severe financial position in the country and the desirability of dependence on public finance being replaced by self-support.

However, the report states that "There is a traditional view of textbooks and educational activities held in Japan, and a tradition of handling one's own textbook with care and of giving lessons using textbooks as the main teaching resource, and the free distribution system has been designed and adopted with these views and attitudes in mind. Through the arrangements for adoption and publication, the present free distribution system plays a practical role in the formation of the basis of the textbook system." In view of the significance possessed by the system and the need to maintain a proper base for the textbook system as such, the conclusion can be drawn that it is appropriate to continue the system.

5. Other Points

The report also states that "Continuous research on the enhancement of textbooks should be encouraged in order to secure the provision of textbooks which are appropriate for use as basic teaching materials, and the results of such research activities should be adequately reflected in the writing and compilation of textbooks." In this context, it suggests that the following measures should be considered with regard to textbook research and evaluation.

"1) An examination should be made of means of conducting systematic and continuous research and evaluation of textbooks from an impartial point of view.

2) A monitoring system should be implemented.

3) There should be encouragement of basic research on textbooks, for example, research based on experience gained in designated schools."

In addition, the report discusses the need to consider appropriate administrative guidance in order to further encourage spontaneous originality and ideas among teachers as well as the adequate compilation of textbooks from an impartial standpoint, since it is felt that some guidelines for teachers published by textbook publishers as manuals for the Courses of Study are inappropriate.

Finally, the responsibilities and duties of teachers are referred to as follows: "In view of the fact that the success of school education depends very much on teachers, it is expected that individual teachers will be aware of their duties and will make continuous efforts to develop and improve their ability to utilize textbooks to the full in their daily teaching."